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Sweet travel advice for independent travellers

## Budget travel in Britain

*Transcript 033*

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Craig: Hi, I'm Craig and this is the Indie Travel Podcast episode 33 at [www.indietravelpodcast.com](http://www.indietravelpodcast.com). Hello and welcome from Tschagguns Austria. Linda's taking the week off this week, so I'm here to talk to you about budget travel in Britain. To those of you who have been, it's sure to raise the eyebrows because it's certainly a contradiction in terms. I read recently that Britain's train network is four times more expensive than the world-wide average. It's madness.

But before we start I just want to mention that our first monthly email has gone out. If you're interested in receiving an email at the start of every month, drop by the website [www.indietravelpodcast.com](http://www.indietravelpodcast.com) and you'll see a grey box there, where you can put in your details.

So, apart from hitching - which is seldom looked upon favourably by British drivers - what are the best ways to get around cheaply? First and last thing: book early! I think this is quite a world-wide phenomenon, but it really helps out in Britain. We've had coach tickets jump from £1 to over £30 in just a 36 hours period. So, beware.

The way it works is this: the carrier will often provide a certain amount of tickets at a very cheap price - it's a loss leader - say they sell it for £1. But when that amount of seats - often just one or two is sold, the ticket price jumps to the next bracket, which is say, £4. Then £8, then £15, then £30. It can get really crazy and extortionate if you're buying one of the last tickets.

Because we're travelling together, we often buy two tickets at once -- and there's a trick here. A £1 ticket will be available, but if you buy two tickets you'll be charged for two in the next bracket, rather than one cheap one and one more expensive one.

So, modes of transport within Britain: flying, train or coach. As an example, we've imagined a trip from London, England to Glasgow, Scotland on the thirty-

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first of October this year. This week, we'll give you the prices as of the end of September and then, at the beginning of next month, we'll let you know what prices the tickets were going for at the end of October.

By air, the cheapest available flight right now is with [EasyJet](#). It comes in £16.99. Depending on how you pay there might be a booking fee as they pass on credit card charges to the customer. Taxes make up £17 and baggage costs £2, so your ticket is calculated at minus 1 penny. Insane. Flying time is estimated at one and a quarter hours, but don't forget check-in and Britain's rigorous security.

Now we used [www.skyscanner.net](http://www.skyscanner.net) to figure that out. It's a site that compares budget airlines and attempts to estimate the taxes. By train, you can use [www.thetrainline.com](http://www.thetrainline.com), to do the same thing. We found our best option is to go with Virgin. It costs £17.50 and takes five hours forty minutes. We've been looking at a normal seat and the date and time can't be changed.

Next we come to coaches: the two main options are Megabus and National Express. Their websites are [www.megabus.com](http://www.megabus.com) and [www.nationalexpress.co.uk](http://www.nationalexpress.co.uk) respectively.

Megabus has tickets available for £3.50 (including their booking fee) and the journey will take a massive 10 hours. National Express also has tickets available for £15 and the journey's going to be a bit shorter at eight hours forty-five minutes.

In the past, we've found both these coach companies can have very cheap tickets - sometimes as low as £1 per person - and both carriers have their pros and cons. National Express seems to be much more reliable; we've never had one break down on us, unlike Megabus where we've only been on one trip where the bus DIDN'T break down. I'd be sure that it is just a statistical fluke except that I've heard similar stories from other people too. But, the Megabus staff seem to be a bit less grumpy than those with National Express.

Earlier this year we were heading from London to Glasgow on Megabus. But, we actually wanted to get up further north, to Aberdeen. That day, we were standing

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at Victoria station, and we asked the manager there if we could extend our ticket. And he said "just get on the bus. Be quiet." So we did, and ended up in Aberdeen. Thanks manager.

And, in comparison, just a few weeks ago we were doing the opposite. From Glasgow to London, this time using National Express. We were heading to the main station, Victoria, but we realised halfway there that we'd be much better off getting off at their Heathrow stop. At that stop, we asked if we could get off there, and get our baggage out, but we we're denied, because our bags were packed in the wrong place.

So, there it is. If you book early enough, flying and trains will save you a lot of time, and they are valid options. But coach travel - at £3.50 - is the only real budget option when travelling in Britain. Unless you like standing in the rain on the side of the road waiting for a lift. And Britain has lots of rain.

We'll be checking up on this early next month to let you know what happened to ticket prices and to give some tips for coach travel in Britain. In the meantime you might want to check out some of our older episode like, our five tips for staying sane during long trips and tips for sleeping in vehicles. They'll be linked along with everything else at [www.indietravelpodcast.com](http://www.indietravelpodcast.com).

During the week Mark from the USA emailed us with some feedback and a couple of ideas for upcoming shows. If there's something you'd like to hear our take on, or you have something you'd like to add to the show get in touch. We've also had some comments on our hostel website review and on our last episode, so come by and check them out. You can also join the six other people that have voted for us as the best travel blog - thanks guys - you can find all these links at [www.indietravelpodcast.com](http://www.indietravelpodcast.com). And I think we're going to need more than six votes to win that competition.

So, until next week, when Linda's back, travel well.

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